



Congressional Record

MR. BISHOP (GA). Madame Speaker, after months of studying the various proposals, listening to feedback from my constituents on both sides of the issue in town hall meetings, informal discussions, letters, e-mails and faxes, and after prayerful reflection, I concluded that I must support the health care reform legislation. I believe it would improve the lives of my constituents by ensuring that they have access to quality, affordable health care. H.R. 3962, while not perfect, makes substantial progress in this regard.

During my town hall meetings on health insurance reform last August, I said that we have a moral obligation to ensure that all Americans receive the health care they need to live healthy and productive lives. I have long been concerned about the poor health indicators among my constituents, and this evening I cast a vote that I believe will have a significant impact on improving the lives of Southwest Georgians now and into the future.

Georgia ranks third in obesity rates for children age 10-17; sixth in the number of tuberculosis cases; seventh in number of low birthweight babies; ninth in diabetes rates for adults; tenth in the number of uninsured; eleventh in hypertension rates; eleventh in the number of new cancer cases; and fourteenth in obesity rates for adults. These numbers are unacceptable.

H.R. 3962, when signed into law, will immediately bring about reforms that will benefit the citizens of Georgia's Second Congressional District and all Americans. The bill will immediately begin to close the donut hole in the Medicare part D prescription drug coverage for seniors. It will outlaw denial of coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, limit premium discrimination based on gender and age, and prevent insurance companies from dropping coverage when people develop serious illnesses and need it the most.

In addition, the bill increases funding for community health centers and other primary care providers, doubling the number of patients seen over five years. It will extend coverage for young people to stay on their parents' insurance plans up to their 27th birthday. It will extend COBRA health insurance coverage for displaced workers. Furthermore, it will hinder price-gouging by requiring that insurance companies disclose rate increases.

By 2013, when the mandate for coverage and the Exchange are in place, additional provisions will take effect including no more co-pays for routine checkups and preventive care, yearly caps on individuals' out-of-pocket expenses and no lifetime caps on what insurance companies will

cover.

In addition to the benefits for Southwest Georgia, the bill will reduce the federal budget deficit by \$104 billion over the next decade. It will allow states to form compacts that will enable consumers to buy policies from insurers across state lines.

With regards to small businesses, the health care legislation will provide tax credits to nearly 14,000 small businesses in the Second Congressional District who offer their employees coverage and exempts 86% of small businesses (those with payrolls of less than \$500,000) from having to provide coverage, and continues the business deduction for those who do.

Finally, the House health care bill prohibits the use of federal funds for abortions. It also requires verification of citizenship or lawful presence for undocumented immigrants to receive coverage.

I look forward to further improvements as the bill is considered by the Senate and the Conference Committee, where differences between the House and Senate bills will be resolved. But this evening's vote is a significant step towards affordable, quality health care for all.